

May 3, 2007

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND
ENERGY CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission convened in a regular session at 7:02 p.m. on Thursday, May 3, 2007 in the West Annex meeting room at Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Commissioners Chim, Decker*, Griffiths, Reilly, Watson*, and Chairperson McCabe.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Deputy Community Development Director Cessna and Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones.

*Commissioner Decker arrived at 7:06 p.m.

*Commissioner Watson arrived at 7:12 p.m.

3. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairperson McCabe.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Reilly, seconded by Commissioner Griffiths, moved to accept and file the report of the secretary on the posting of the agenda for this meeting; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

6A. MEETING OF APRIL 5, 2007

MOTION: Commissioner Reilly, seconded by Commissioner Chim, moved for the approval of the April 5, 2007 Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission meeting minutes as submitted; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

7A. VIRGINIA HILKER WITH INFORMATION ON COOL CITIES

Virginia Hilker thanked the Commission for the significant role it played in making Torrance a Cool City and reported that as of April 26, 2007 494 mayors have signed on to the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. She suggested that the Commission recommend to City Council the approval of a contract with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) to receive experienced staff, software tools, and a wide variety of programs and technical assistance to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. She distributed an ICLEI outline of Benefits of Participation, Getting Started, and The 5 Milestones as well as fliers announcing The Environmental Priorities Network's Second Annual South Bay Energy Fair on May 5, 2007 and the 2007 Solar Homes Tour on June 16, 2007.

Deputy Director Cessna noted that the Agreement would be forwarded to Seattle and recommended waiting until the next fiscal year beginning July 1, 2007 to contact ICLEI.

Commissioner Watson suggested placing a press release in the Daily Breeze regarding the City's adoption of the Agreement.

Chairperson McCabe initiated a brief discussion about the goals of the Commission's subcommittees and how they connect with the Cool Cities program. He suggested that the subcommittees conduct preliminary discussions and present information at the June 7, 2007 Commission meeting.

7B. WEST HIGH SCHOOL PRESENTATION ON BIODEGRADABLE PLASTICS

Daniel Coffee and Arohe Sharma, West High School Environmental Club, provided a presentation entitled "A Convenient Truth" regarding the dangerous effects of the use of expanded polystyrene (Styrofoam) on the environment and economy. They discussed negative impacts that include litter, trash in storm drains, health, and marine life, noting that it takes 500 years for expanded polystyrene to decompose. They presented information about the ordinance passed in the City of Santa Monica in December 2006 banning the use of expanded polystyrene from food packaging materials. They recommended the adoption of a similar ordinance in the City of Torrance, specifically take out food packaging, to help create a State-wide change and presented a list of brands of biodegradable alternatives that are available. They further discussed the Environmental Club's recycling program at West High School.

Commissioner Reilly commended the presentation and suggested that a more powerful presentation might include a measurable success in the City of Santa Monica before and after adoption of the ordinance.

Daniel stated that most of the ordinances in the State have been recently passed, noting that restaurants and companies are usually given a year to conform to the new standards.

Commissioner Griffiths stated that he was impressed with the presentation and mentioned that the City of San Francisco has recently banned the use of plastic bags.

Commissioner Watson discussed reports from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Association. She noted that the presentation targeted beach communities and suggested that Daniel and Arohe explore ways that Torrance is impacted by the use of polystyrenes.

In response to Commissioner Chim's inquiry, Daniel stated that the closest Styrofoam production company to Torrance is in the City of Hawthorne.

Chairperson McCabe stated that the City would need to weigh the costs and benefits of passing such an ordinance, noting potential impacts to local businesses. He suggested encouraging the City of Torrance and Torrance Unified School District to be the leaders in the use biodegradable plastics.

Commissioner Reilly offered suggestions on incentives and marketing strategies for businesses to use, noting that a straight-out ban often creates negative backlash. She suggested talking to mall management about changing the packaging of products in its food court and to consider finding an industrial sponsor.

Commissioner Decker suggested talking with businesses about being better citizens of the City and making them aware that they could be part of the solution.

Deputy Director Cessna offered to speak with the Purchasing Department about the feasibility of purchasing biodegradable plastics.

Chairperson McCabe commended the presentation and suggested that Daniel and Arohe initiate discussions with the City, Torrance Unified School District, and other environmental groups, with further discussion to be continued to the June 7, 2007 Commission meeting.

The Commission was in recess from 8:15 p.m. to 8:19 p.m.

8. SIGN HEARINGS

Chairperson McCabe explained the policies and procedures of the Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to City Council.

8A. SNP07-00001: SAIGON FLAVOR RESTAURANT – 2515 CARSON STREET

Request: To maintain "as-built" non-illuminated individual channel letter wall signage: 2' high x 10' "Restaurant", on the east facing elevation and 18" high x 16' "Saigon Flavor Restaurant", on the south facing elevation. All copy is made of foam letters with a blue Plexiglas face.

TOTAL REQUEST: 44.0 SQUARE FEET

Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of the request with the following modification:

- 1) Remove the words "Restaurant" from each elevation in order to meet 2/3rds length requirement.

With the aid of slides, Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones reviewed the request and discussed staff's analysis and recommendation. She stated that the overall length of existing signage exceeds the sign criteria for the center and that there is insufficient negative space to separate the wall sign on the south elevation from the sign on the east elevation. She expressed concern that the applicant continues to put up signage without approval and permits from the City, adding that a permit is also needed for the existing neon window signs.

In response to Chairperson McCabe's inquiry, Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones stated that she did not think that the sign vendor has installed any other signs in the City.

MOTION: At 8:30 p.m., Commissioner Watson moved to open the public hearing. Commissioner Griffiths seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Muoi Le, applicant, stated that the words "Restaurants" were needed to distinguish his business as a restaurant.

Chairperson McCabe suggested that the item be continued until the June 7, 2007 Commission meeting when the applicant's son or sign vendor would be able to attend.

MOTION: At 8:35 p.m., Commissioner Watson, seconded by Commissioner Decker, moved to close the public hearing and continue it to June 7, 2007.

8. INFORMATION ITEMS

9. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Deputy Director Cessna stated the sign appeal for National Sports Grill would be going to City Council on May 8, 2007 and that the feral cat item would be heard on May 15, 2007.

Commissioner Chim discussed her recent trip to Japan with the California Senate Delegation and efforts to reduce air and noise pollution there.

A brief discussion centered on candidates for Green Pride in Torrance awards.

Commissioner Watson stated that she hoped the Green Line would be extended to Los Angeles International Airport, announced a Green Building Expo in the City of Santa Monica on May 19, 2007, and shared information about the book Twinkie, Deconstructed by Steve Ettlinger.

Commissioner Reilly discussed the use of recycling containers in the City of Prague.

Chairperson McCabe asked staff if the information they provided on City Department's green programs at the April 5, 2007 Commission meeting could be put on the City's website.

Chairperson McCabe initiated a brief discussion about the possibility of having a City-sponsored environmental event at Farmers' Market.

Deputy Director Cessna discussed legal options being considered to address real estate "spinners" in the City.

Items for the June 7, 2007 Commission meeting agenda were discussed.

Commissioners and staff congratulated Chairperson McCabe on the birth of his daughter Fiammetta on April 29, 2007.

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At 9:24 p.m., Commissioner Watson moved to adjourn the meeting to June 7, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. in the West Annex meeting room. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chim and, hearing no objection, Chairperson McCabe so ordered.

Approved as Submitted June 7, 2007 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
